

Unity School's New Faculty and Staff 2024-2025



Melissa Brasswell served as the kindergarten maternity sub last spring and will now join us full time. She has been hired as an Academic Coach for the 2024-2025 school year and will support our Kindergarten teachers. Melissa has over 20 years of experience working in education. With an AS Degree in business administration from PBSC, along with a CDA Degree in education, she wants to make a difference in students' lives and help them develop skills to become lifelong learners. Most of all she wants her students to know they are important and they are loved. Melissa is a native Floridian with 2 grown children, and 2 dachshunds she loves dearly! She and her husband enjoy spending time doing outside activities, and her hobbies include cooking and baking, traveling and decorating her home for every holiday! Please be sure to stop and say hello to Melissa and welcome her to our commUNITY.



Melissa Dow, originally from Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, earned her psychology degree from North Central College and a master's in special education from Loyola University Chicago. With over 13 years of teaching experience, she specializes in executive function skills, progress monitoring, and writing support. After moving to Delray Beach in 2019 for her husband Blake's job, she became an executive function coach at Beyond BookSmart while caring for her daughter, Ryan, and their puppy, Rusty. Melissa loves the outdoors, staying active, and traveling. This fall marks a new chapter as Ryan steps into Unity's orientation program, and with great enthusiasm Melissa joins the Unity team!



Alyssa Frank is originally from New Jersey but has moved to raise her family in the Sunshine State. She has a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Northern Kentucky University and a Master of Science in Marine Conservation from the University of South Alabama. Nature is what makes her happy, and she loves to teach everyone how to be respectful of the environment we live in. She enjoys taking her two-year-old son on nature walks and to museums, aquariums, and zoos. She found her passion for teaching while leading field trips at Loggerhead Marinelife Center. During her short time in Florida, she has begun to develop great relationships with non-profits in the community. She is ecstatic to be teaching Middle School Science at Unity.



Danielle Hazard is originally from Long Island, New York and received her Masters in Education at James Madison University in Virginia, where she taught for eleven years. She recently moved to Delray Beach and has been teaching in Florida for the last two years. During her second year teaching in Florida, she was voted Boca Raton Elementary's teacher of the year for the 2023-2024 school year. Danielle prides herself on establishing relationships with her students and helping her students reach their greatest potential socially and academically. She has a lot of experience in leadership roles including being a team lead teacher, head of the safety patrol program for her students in former schools, as well as running student leadership programs at the elementary level. In her spare time she loves hanging out with her sweet dog, Lola, spending time with her family, hanging out at the pool or beach, and taking pictures. Danielle looks forward to getting the chance to work with some amazing fifth graders this coming school year!



Natividad (Nati) Martinez was born and raised right here in Delray Beach. From an early age, Nati dreamed of becoming a teacher, and she is so excited that dream is coming true at Unity! Natividad attended Palm Beach State where she received her AS in Early Childhood, along with her certificate in Child Care Management. Nati has been working with children for about four (4) years now throughout Palm Beach County. Natividad is thankful, and very excited, to be joining the Preschool class at Unity. After joining us for the last couple of months in the prior school year, Nati knows the staff, children, and parents here are amazing, and she feels blessed to be able to grow with them.



Lisa Pluskota is originally from New Jersey and Bel Air, Maryland, but has made her home in Boynton Beach for the past twelve years. Lisa graduated from York College of Pennsylvania with a major in Elementary Education and a minor in Special Education. In college, she was also a two-sport athlete, playing field hockey and swimming. Lisa has taught kindergarten, 2nd grade, and 3rd grade with six of those years dedicated to the Dual Language Program, as well as the 3rd and 4th grade Accelerated Mathematics Plan (AMP). Lisa has a wealth of knowledge using data to create and implement individual, small group, and whole group instruction to fit the needs of diverse learners. Her husband, Trevor, is also an elementary school teacher with most of his career teaching 4th and 5th grade. They have two children, Blake and Kaylee, who will be attending Unity. Lisa is looking forward to teaching at Unity and creating lifelong memories with her incoming 4th grade students!



Stephanie Ream grew up in Maryland and received her BA from Bethany College in 1995 where she met her husband Peter before moving to South Florida. Stephanie and Peter raised their three children Lucy, Alex and Maggie here in Boynton Beach. Stephanie taught Kindergarten and PreK for 15 years at St Joseph's Episcopal School and was the Pre K Director and Teacher for one year at Sacred Heart Catholic School. Stephanie loves hanging out with her family, going to the beach and traveling. Stephanie is very much looking forward to joining Unity and reconnecting with her colleagues and the families she once taught at St. Joseph's. Lisa will be bringing a wealth of knowledge to Unity as she joins our PreA team this fall.



Many of you know Anna Schuemann who has been an educator for 15 years, most recently as a fourth-grade teacher with us right here at Unity School. We are excited to announce that Anna will transition into the role of Unity's Lower School Technology Integrator for the upcoming school year, where she will incorporate technology and collaborate with teachers to enhance their lessons and bring them to life. Anna holds a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Ramapo College in New Jersey and is certified in gifted and talented education for K-6. Anna's passion for teaching students lies in creating an engaging and dynamic learning environment. She strives to build curiosity in her students by using hands-on activities, projects, and real-world problem-solving techniques, drawing from various educational programs, including her Project Lead the Way Launch Program certification. She is looking forward to a fun and engaging school year.



Beth Smallwood is very excited to be rejoining the Unity Family! She has been hired as an Academic Coach for the 2024-2025 school year and will support our First Grade teachers. Beth has over 17 years of experience working in elementary education. She was born and raised in Delray Beach and has strong connections to the community. Beth has two children who both attend USF in Tampa. She and her husband Tim and dog Bandit, live in Boynton Beach. Beth graduated from Palm Beach Atlantic University with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and a minor in Early Childhood Education. Beth has taught Kindergarten, First, and Second Grades. Her love for children and teaching started at a very young age and continues. Beth is looking forward to a great school year and building years of memories with the Unity School Family!



Curtis Viselli will be joining Unity as our new Band Director. Curtis is an experienced instrumental music educator with a passion for enriching the lives of students and the community through the arts. He has 12 years of experience working in middle school programming and directing performances. After graduating from the University of Florida with a Bachelor of Music Education, Curtis began teaching beginning and intermediate band and guitar classes. He later served as an assistant jazz band director and orchestra director for a school in Champaign, Illinois. Curtis and his family are moving down to south Florida to be closer to family so he is looking forward to this next step in his personal and professional journey.



Jessica Warner is starting her 4th year with us at Unity! In addition to her role as a full-time 3rd grade teacher, with the support of her Academic Coach, Jessica will also be collaborating with our upper elementary teachers this school year. This new role will allow Jessica to target specific student needs and provide academic strategies that help all students find success. One of the key aspects of Jessica's expanded responsibilities is utilizing MAP Growth testing data to identify specific skills upon which students can grow. This data-driven approach will enable her to tailor her instruction and support strategies to the specific needs of each student. With Jessica's strong teaching skills and dedication to helping students reach their full potential, we are confident that she will excel in this new role.



Tara Weidenfeller is a professional director, producer and stage manager whose recent projects range from national tours (*Rockin' Road to Dublin*) to feature films (*The Gravedigger* 2019). She has led theatrical production projects for the corporate offices of Celebrity Cruises as it moved its entertainment operations into a new custom built studio at Florida International University. Ms. Weidenfeller has developed and established many theatrical educational programs including Camp Barn Theatre in Stuart, FL, which is now celebrating its 17th year of operation. Her favorite South Florida show credits include *Le Nozze Di Figaro* and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (Miami Music Festival), *Crazy For You* (Carbonell 2011 Win), *The Sound of Music* (Carbonell 2010 Nomination), and *Barnum* (Carbonell 2011 Nomination).



Amy Wiltse is excited to start her first full year at Unity School as the Academic Administrative Assistant in the front office. Originally from Brooklyn, New York, Amy has been living in Florida since 1997. She is the proud mom of three children. Her oldest son graduated from FAU in 2022 and is now back in school to become a PA. Her daughter is a Senior at USF majoring in Early Childhood Education with a minor in deaf studies, and her youngest, a son, is a Senior enjoying being on the football and weightlifting teams. Amy is an experienced administrative assistant with years of experience in local schools.

Teaching Teams 2024-2025

Preschool

Toddler: Maria Duenas, Jennifer Limage, Clemencia Rosado, Ann Visconti

Orientation A: Allison MacDuffie, Maggie Nuzzi, Mindy Wecker

Orientation B: Lisa Beira, Samantha Frost, Cathy Nevad

Pre-A:, Jordan Catanzaro, Amanda Donaghue, Jeanette Llerena, Martha Puentes, Stephanie Ream

Pre-B: Darling Becker, Cristina Gazso, Abby Nevad, Nati Martinez, Nilda Torres

Elementary

Kindergarten: Stacey Smith (KA), Deb Klarfeld (KB), Melissa Brasswell and Sue Arts (Academic Coaches)

First grade: Jaclyn Daily (1A), Leidy Cue (Rodriguez) (1B), Beth Smallwood (Academic Coach)

Second grade: Ann Fox (2A), Megan Partridge (2B), Hayley Singer (2C)

Third grade: Jessica Warner (3A), Melissa Dow (Academic Coach)

Fourth grade: Lisa Pluskota (4A), Jaclyn Tafaro (4B)

Fifth grade: Amanda D'Angio (5A), Danielle Hazard (5B)

Middle School

Language Arts & MS Director: Barbara Ferguson

Language Arts: Brittany Kiernan

Math: Linda Simpson, Luis Bolivar

Science: Alyssa Frank

Social Studies: Dan Phillips

5th & Middle School Spanish: Liliana Zambrano

Specials

Athletics: Sharon Gerry, Hector Ramirez

Fine Arts: KayLyn Bottiglieri, Erin Kronzek, Curtis Viselli, Tara Weidenfeller

Lessons in Living: Rosanna Edwards, Cami Ryder

Library: Mandy Lamb

Technology: Linda Methol, Anna Schuemann, Doug Mattocks, Tremaine Thomas

Preschool & Elementary Spanish: Marleen Bernstein